ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Methods are provided for parsing, in a message parser P1, P2 of a message processing system 1, a plurality of messages comprising respective corresponding sets of data fields arranged in a predetermined format, to extract a corresponding data field from each message. The format is defined by format information which is stored in the system 1 and which indicates a name for each data field in a said set. In response to a handle request, which indicates the name of a required data field, received from a component 2, 3, 6 of the system, the format information is accessed to determine the location of the required data field in a said message. A handle, indicative of this location, is then supplied to the component. In response to subsequent parsing requests, each comprising the handle and a said message, from the component, the required data field is extracted from the message in each parsing request according to the location indicated by the handle. Message parsing apparatus for handling a plurality of different message formats is also provided. The apparatus 4 may include a plurality of message parsers P1, P2, one for each message format, and a parsing manager 6. The parsing manager 6 manages communications between system applications 2, 3 and the parsers P1, P2 to enable different-format message series to be parsed by the appropriate parsers using the improved parsing methods.